

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 NEA-06 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01 /077 W

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R 131720Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 660

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7855

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP, MO, SS

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY SPANISH REACTION TO UN VOTE ON SAHARAN ISSUE

REF MADRID 7805

1. SUMMARY: SPANISH PRESS HAS GIVEN PRIME COVERAGE TO DEC 12 UN NOTE ON SAHARA QUESTION, FOCUSING PARTICULARLY ON LARGE NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS AND US SUPPORT FOR MOROCCAN INITIATIVE. INTERPRETIVE REPORTS AND AT LEAST ONE EDITORIAL HAVE WARNED THAT US VOTE WAS SURPRISE TO SPANISH WHICH COULD IMPERIL CLIMATE FOR CURRENT BASE TALKS, END SUMMARY.

2. SPANISH PRESS HAS GIVEN HEAVY COVERAGE, MUCH OF IT INTERPRETIVE AND SOME EDITORIAL COMMENT TO UN FOURTH COMMITTEE VOTE TO REFER SAHARA QUESTION TO ICJ. REPORTS ORIGINATING WITH SPANISH NEWS AGENCIES AND CORRESPONDENTS IN NEW YORK HAVE PLAYED UP LARGE NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS "AGAINST" ICJ REFERRAL, PARTICULARLY AMONG EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, AND SPLIT IN AFRICAN BLOC ON ISSUE. MUCH OF REPORTING HAS ALSO underscored ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS AND FEF-
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ICIENCIES IN RESOLUTION, PARTICULARLY AS CITED IN UN INTERVENTIONS

OF SPANISH PERMREP PINIES AND US AND JAPANESE REPS.

3. US VOTE AGAINST SPAIN AND WITH AFRA-ARAB STATES ALSO RECEIVED CLOSE COVERAGE, AS TO LESSER EXTENT DID VOTES AGAINST SPAIN BY SUCH FRIENDS AS FRANCE AND PORTUGAL. UN CORRESPONDENT OF INDEPENDENT MADRID DAILY "INFORMACIONES" REPORTED SURPRISE AMONG WESTERN DELEGATIONS AT UN OVER US ATTITUDE IN VOTE, QUOTING ONE UNNAMED WESTERN DIPLOMAT AS CALLING US VOTE AS "UNFRIENDLY GESTURE BY COUNTRY WHICH IS OFFICIALLY NEUTRAL IN THIS AREA". NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT OF MADRID CATHOLIC DAILY "YA" GUSTAVO VALVERDE, FOCUSED ON INCONGRUITY OF US VOTE IN LIGHT OF SCALI SPEECH QUESTIONING VALIDITY OF "NUMERICAL MAJORITIES OF ME MOMENT". VALVERDE ADDED THAT WASHINGTON'S POSTURE FURTHER CLOUDS CURRENT US-SPANISH BASE NEGOTIATIONS. SIMILAR ADVERSE IMPACT ON CURRENT BASE NEGOTIATIONS SUGGESTED IN REPORT BY NY CORRESPONDENT OF QKASI-OFFICIAL NATIONAL MOVEMENT DAILY "ARRIBA".

4. IN FOLLOW UP INTERPRETIVE PIECE ON CURRENT BASE NEGOTIATIONS "ARRIBA'S" NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT, FELIX ORTEGA, REPORTS WASHINGTON FULLY AWARE THAT ITS VOTE ON ICJ REFERRAL COULD BE BADLY RECEIVED IN MADRID. REVIEWING RECENT HISTORY OF US POSITION ON SAHARA, ORTEGA NOTES THAT IN SPITE OF ASSURANCES TO CONTRARY US HAS ALWAYS TILTED TOWARD MOROCCO ON SAHARAN ISSUE. HE ATTRIBUTES TILT IN US POLICY TO ONE OR TWO FACTORS: (1) ASSURED OF SUPPORT OF SPANISH ALLY, US SEEKS TO MAINTAIN IN MOROCCO AT LEAST A WEAK SPEARHEAD FOR ITS INFLUENCE AMONG ARAB STATES AND TO AVOID RISK TO ITS MILITARY INSTALLATIONS THERE; (2) LESS CONVINCING "ALGERIA THESIS", WHICH HOLDS THAT WASHINGTON FEARS THAT WEAK SAHARA WOULD FALL IN ALGERIAN ORBIT, ENTAILING DANGER OF UNFRIENDLY MILITARY PRESENCE ON ATLANTIC.

5. "ARRIBA" EDITORIAL SAME DAY ECHOED FREQUENT THEME IN SPANISH COMMENTARY BY CLAIMING THAT UN VOTE, WHICH MOTIVATED BY AMBITIONS FOR PHOSPHATES OR TERRITORY, OVERLOOKS FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF SAHARAN PEOPLE TO HAVE VOICE IN THEIR OWN DESTINY. EDITORIAL IN "YA" SAW SIMILAR THREAT IN DECISION TO RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, WHICH THREAT UNDERLIES MISGIVINGS AMONG NUMEROUS THIRD-WORLD STATES WHO ABSTAINED. AGREEING WITH KENYAN REPS STATEMENT THAT RESOLUTION CONSTITUTES "DANGEROUS PRECEDENT", "YA" CLAIMS TO BE SURPRISED THAT THEORETICALLY NEUTRAL COUNTRIES SUCH

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AS US HAVE, BY THEIR SUPPORT, LEGITIMIZED SUCH DUBIOUS POSITION.

6. FOR MONARCHIST DAILY "ABC"; UN VOTE WAS A "MANEUVER AGAINST THE SAHARANS," "ABC" EDITORIAL HOLDS THAT EVEN TO QUESTION HOLDING OF INTENDED REFERENDUM WOULD CONTRAVENE WELL ESTABLISHED RIGHT FULLY SANCTIONED BY UN. "ABC" CONCLUDES THAT HAGUE RULING, EVEN IF IT ACCEPTS ALLEGATIONS OF MOROCCAN SOVEREIGNTY, MUST NOT ALTER RIGHT OF SAHARANS TO EXPRESS THEIR WILL.

7.COMMENT: THIS IS ONLY PRELIMINARY PRESS REACTION AS OTHER PUBLICATIONS STILL NEED TIME TO DO THEIR RESEARCH AND MARSHAL ARGUMENTS BEFORE COMMENT. NEVERTHELESS, WE CONSIDER PRELIMINARY SAMPLING, AT LEAST WITH REGARD TO US VOTE, TO BE FAIR REPRESENTATION OF SORT OF COMMENTARY WE CAN EXPECT IN VIEW OF SPANISH PRESS' KEEN AND PREDOMINANTLY CRITICAL INTEREST IN CURRENT SPANISH BASE NEGOTIATIONS. THOUGH NO REASON TO BELIEVE PRESS COMMENTARY IS ORCHESTRATED BY GOVT, EDITORIAL OPINION THAT US VOTE WILL BECLOUD BASE NEGOTIATIONS PARALLELS COMMENTS CONVEYED BY MFA OFFICER TO CHARGE. SPEAKING AT BEHEST OF FONMIN MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR MIDDLE EAST AFFARIS TOLD CHARGE DEC 12 (REFTEL) THAT US VOTE WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT CLIMATE FOR CONDUCT OF BASE NEGOTIATIONS.

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